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Report of the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund on the work of its first regular session of 2006

(16-20 and 23 January 2006)

Addendum*

Joint meeting of the Executive Boards of the United Nations Development Programme/United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Children's Fund and the World Food Programme

* The present addendum to the report of the UNICEF Executive Board on its first regular session of 2006 contains a summary of the discussions that took place during the joint meeting of the Executive Boards of UNICEF, the United Nations Development Programme/United Nations Population Fund and the World Food Programme held on 20 and 23 January 2006; it was prepared jointly by the secretariats of the funds and programmes and was submitted late because of the need for consultations among them.

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Capacity-building and capacity development

1. The UNICEF Executive Director introduced the item and background paper. She emphasized the need to integrate capacity-strengthening objectives in national development strategies towards achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The background paper drew on ongoing work of the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) Executive Committee and preliminary outputs of the UNDG working group on capacity development. The paper provided examples of common initiatives by United Nations agencies and ideas on how they could respond better to national needs.

2. The Deputy Permanent Secretary, Public Service Management, of the Office of the President of the United Republic of Tanzania spoke of his country's experience and the considerable support of the United Nations system. Potential areas for further support included the national development strategy and policy advice on cross-sectoral issues. Challenges for the United Nations centred on balancing collaborative and joint programming, maximizing prospects for participation of various offices and addressing bureaucratic operating modalities.

3. The UNICEF Representative in the United Republic of Tanzania spoke on behalf of the United Nations country team. Discussing the United Nations role, he said that the establishment of the Tanzania Socio-Economic Database, based on *DevInfo*, and its development into an Internet-based tool for democratizing data was a concrete example of support that helped not only to monitor poverty but also to develop poverty reduction plans. The United Nations system needed to "staff up" to provide world-class capacity-development expertise; streamline its procedures; strengthen its policies, tools and procedures for participation in sectoral programmes; and optimize its role regarding general budget support.

4. Delegations emphasized the critical role of the United Nations in capacity development. A holistic approach to capacity development should include attention to higher education, wage policy and other incentives, and reversing the brain drain, with the United Nations playing a strategic role. The background paper should be revised for the annual session of the Economic and Social Council to show the progress made by the United Nations; indicate the common tools and staff profiles for support to capacity development; and provide a clear plan of action, with benchmarks.

5. Speakers asked how capacity development would be integrated into programming and called for closer collaboration with the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the World Bank. Information was requested in several areas: challenges, such as adapting to the changing environment; lessons learned; unified support by United Nations agencies on the ground, moving from project to sectoral and other harmonized approaches; how the United Nations would be at the centre of capacity development reform; and how it would promote South-South cooperation.

6. Several delegates requested a more strategic report that covered achievements and constraints, gender issues and a greater analysis of underlying challenges and practical measures. There should be more focus on results, especially regarding the Millennium Development Goals; institutional capacity

development, which the United Nations was best suited to address; lessons learned; capacity development in fragile States; and improved performance and results, especially regarding support for reform of public procurement and financial systems.

Transition from relief to development, focusing on natural disasters

7. The President of the WFP Executive Board, stressing the importance of national leadership in the transition agenda, welcomed the participation of the Representative of the Government of Pakistan, Mr. Khalid Saeed, and the Representative of the United Nations country team (UNCT) in Pakistan at the Joint Meeting.

8. Mr. Saeed discussed the necessity of a coherent governmental role in coordination for both the relief and recovery stages of response. He urged that in responding to natural disasters particular attention be paid to vulnerable people who are often the worst affected. He also suggested that insufficient preparedness for natural disasters was a major stumbling block to ensuring the quickest possible transition from relief to development.

9. The WFP Senior Deputy Executive Director welcomed the fact that it is now well-established that "transition" follows both conflicts and natural disasters. Accordingly, UNDG agencies – through UNDG/Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs (ECHA) Working Group and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) clusters in particular – were building tools and capacity to help UNCTs.

10. The Representative of the UNCT in Pakistan described the newly-established IASC cluster system and its successes in the Pakistan earthquake response. A country-based Early Recovery Cluster convened in Pakistan and produced a Framework to make transition a conscious part of the UNCT emergency response. One of the important contributions of the cluster was to support spontaneous recovery efforts from the early days of the emergency response. The Representative stressed that IASC clusters should serve as collective decision-making bodies rather than meetings that push parochial interests. Important lessons included the need for Government leadership and coordination, the success in linking emergency response to longer-term transition and development strategies, and the need to ensure that surge capacity is sustained beyond the immediate relief phase and extended for the early recovery and transition period as well.

11. Questions and discussion with delegations revolved around several key issues:

(a) *Protection*. Delegations welcomed the protection dimensions after natural disasters in the background paper and encouraged more explicit attention to vulnerable groups, the social impact of natural disasters, the gender-related effects of disasters, reproductive health, children and orphans.

(b) *Post-disaster needs assessment framework*. The UNDG/ECHA Working Group was encouraged to continue working towards a comprehensive framework that is complementary to the IASC cluster exercise and that addresses gaps such as property and land rights, protection, and gender.

(c) *Lessons learned.* Delegations encouraged the UNDG to capture lessons learned in transition responses, perhaps through the upcoming real-time evaluation, to ensure they inform future guidance.

(d) *Inclusiveness.* The UNDG was urged to continue making efforts to ensure that non-governmental organizations, the World Bank and other international financial institutions are brought fully into common, nationally led transition responses.

(e) *National leadership.* Delegations encouraged national leadership, recognizing the daunting capacity-building implications for this in the poorest countries facing transition challenges.

(f) *Effective coordination and funding.* Delegations recognized the need to provide systematic coordination support to Resident Coordinators from the onset of a natural disaster so they can coordinate effectively early recovery activities and United Nations system interventions.

HIV/AIDS: Follow-up to the recommendations of the Global Task Team

12. The item was chaired and introduced by the President, UNDP/UNFPA Executive Board. The UNDP Administrator spoke on behalf of UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and WFP, providing updates on follow-up to the Global Task Team process and emphasizing links with United Nations reform efforts. Country-level experiences were presented by Mr. Malick Sene, Executive Secretary, National Council on the Fight Against AIDS, Mali, and Mr. Harold Robinson, UNFPA Representative and Chair, United Nations theme group on HIV/AIDS, Jamaica. Mr. Michel Sidibe, Director of Country and Regional Support, UNAIDS, provided an assessment of progress and challenges in implementing the recommendations.

13. The panellists highlighted progress in several areas, including the division of labour among UNAIDS cosponsors; establishment of joint United Nations teams on AIDS at country level; the Global Joint Problem-Solving and Implementation Support Team; and mainstreaming HIV/AIDS into poverty reduction strategy papers. Updates were also provided on efforts to domesticate the Global Task Team recommendations in several countries, and panellists noted that the recommendations are helping to reinforce the "three ones" principles for coordination of national responses and to contribute to United Nations reform efforts. However, to ensure effective support to national responses, management arrangements, planning, reporting and accountability must be streamlined at all levels to avoid coordination bottlenecks and complex support structures. From a programme country perspective, in addition to good management at the country level, a more effective response requires strengthening of national capacity, pragmatic actions and confidence in partners.

14. Delegations welcomed the presentations and the spirit of cooperation and collaboration among the four agencies. They expressed support for the Global Task Team process and commended the progress made in advancing implementation of the recommendations. Delegations applauded the establishment of the UNAIDS division of labour, and acknowledged the importance of the lead roles of UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and WFP. It was noted that further discussions were required at country level to ensure that the lead agency role takes into account cosponsor experience and capacity to

deliver. The four agencies were urged to continue to strengthen mainstreaming of HIV/AIDS within the work of their organizations.

15. Delegations welcomed the establishment of joint United Nations teams on AIDS and stated that these should help to improve coherence and coordination of the response at country level as well as accountability of individual agencies. The UNAIDS secretariat and UNDG were encouraged to guide the process at country level. Delegations also emphasized that simplification of processes and procedures must remain a priority and cautioned against expansion of coordination mechanisms. In underscoring that HIV/ADS remains a critical emergency and development challenge, delegations recognized that national leadership and ownership are vital to implementing effective responses. The need to ensure availability of resources to support country and regional efforts was highlighted, in addition to human resource capacity challenges, and issues of vulnerability, human rights and gender.

16. Delegations emphasized that commitment and accountability for advancing the Global Task Team recommendations must come from all stakeholders, including national governments, donors and the United Nations system. They underscored that successful implementation depends on the full partnership of all key actors to ensure alignment, simplification and harmonization for effective action and results at country level.

Simplification and harmonization, with a special focus on the programming process

17. The President, UNDP/UNFPA Executive Board, chaired the session and introduced the item. The Executive Director, UNFPA, made a presentation on behalf of UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and WFP. Her Excellency Mrs. Maria de Fatima Lima da Veiga, Permanent Representative of Cape Verde; and the United Nations Resident Coordinator and Representative of the United Nations funds and programmes, Cape Verde, also made presentations.

18. The UNFPA Executive Director highlighted the proposals from the UNDG Executive Committee on enhancing the alignment of the United Nations system's analytical work with national processes; reducing the burden of the programme preparation process; and increasing national ownership. The ideas would be further discussed with Member States and national partners in preparing a jointly elaborated paper for the Boards in June.

19. Concerning the common country programme (CCP) process in Cape Verde, the Permanent Representative noted that the experience of the Government had been very positive and had largely met its needs in ensuring that the United Nations programme responded to national priorities, including the Millennium Development Goals. The programme had allowed alignment with the National Strategy for Growth and Poverty Reduction and had contributed to improved coordination and management of the programming process.

20. The United Nations Representative for Cape Verde underscored the positive experience from the UNCT perspective, both in terms of adhering to the principles for simplification and responding to the Government's needs. She noted the importance of regional and headquarters support and guidance in new approaches and delineated lessons that could be utilized elsewhere.

21. Delegations appreciated the presentations and broadly welcomed the ideas contained in the background document with regard to the programme preparation and approval process. They commended the funds and programmes for taking forward the Paris aid effectiveness agenda and implementing the Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review resolution. They were pleased to learn about the CCP process and joint office model in Cape Verde.

22. Delegations underscored the critical importance of national leadership, ownership and capacity. They emphasized the need to ensure the effective involvement of specialized agencies and for agency mandates to remain responsive to national priorities/needs. Transparency and accountability for results and resources should be ensured in any new processes; transaction costs reduced; and efficiency and effectiveness increased. Delegations envisaged the need to enhance the capacity and role of the Resident Coordinator and UNCTs, including to enable effective evaluation.

23. Delegations noted that the programming process proposals had implications for the governance mechanisms and working methods of the Executive Boards. While most delegations positively viewed shortening the time frame for approval, more discussion was needed on the nature of new Board procedures.

24. Regarding the Cape Verde experience, delegations asked how non-resident and specialized agencies would be involved. Inquiring about the unified budget, they urged further harmonizing of budgetary matters, while maintaining clear accountability. It was noted that existing procedures for overall programme funds remained in place and UNDG would continue monitoring programme impact in Cape Verde. UNDG was also reviewing how to move forward on other joint offices.